

## Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, BD

SUBJECT: MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH OPPOSITION LEADER

REF: A) HAMILTON 404; B) HAMILTON 403

1. SUMMARY: IN A 45-MINUTE DISCUSSION IN MY OFFICE ON AUGUST 28, OPPOSITION LEADER LOIS BROWNE-EVANS REVIEWED WITH ME ACTIVITIES ON THE ISLAND DURING MY TWO-MONTH ABSENCE; THE PITT COMMISSION REPORT, THE CONVENING OF A LOCAL CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR AND THE PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY'S (PLP) CURRENT STANCE ON THE INDEPENDENCE ISSUE. MRS. BROWNE-EVANS WAS QUITE FORTHCOMING AND EBULLIENT IN HER DISCUSSION OF THESE SUBJECTS, REFLECTING THE ENTHUSIASM OF AN OPPOSITION LEADER WHOSE PARTY HAD BENEFITED POLITICALLY FROM BOTH THE POSSIBLE RAMIFICATIONS OF THE PITT REPORT AND THE BACKLASH OF WHAT SHE CONSIDERED TO BE SOME INEPT DECISIONS AND ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE UNITED BERMUDA PARTY DURING THE SUMMER. END SUMMARY.

2. PITT COMMISSION REPORT: IN DISCUSSING THE PITT REPORT IN GENERAL, MRS. BROWNE-EVANS ENGAGED IN PARTY RHETORIC IN CLAIMING THAT THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WERE NOT SURPRISING THAT THEY REPRESENTED A REALISTIC APPRAISAL OF THE CAUSES OF UNDERLYING TENSIONS ON THE ISLAND AND, THEREFORE, PRESENTED A CLEAR MANDATE FOR THE UNITED BERMUDA PARTY (UBP)

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TO TAKE EARLY AND EFFECTIVE REMEDIAL ACTION. SHE SAID THE FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS IS FOR THE PREMIER TO CONVENE A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR SOLELY TO ADDRESS THE QUESTIONS OF ELECTORAL REFORM. CONTRARY TO THE OPINION CONVEYED TO ME BY THE PREMIER (REF A), SHE CLAIMS THAT THE CONFERENCE SHOULD BE STRICTLY A BERMUDA FUNCTION TO BE CONVENED BY THE PREMIER (NOT THE GOVERNOR),

WITH ONLY MEMBERS OF BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES PARTICIPATING. SHE SAID THE DELEGATES TO THE CONFERENCE SHOULD REPRESENT THE PROPORTIONATE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PARTY REPRESENTATIVES IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

3. ELECTORAL REFORM: MRS. BROWNE-EVANS STATED THAT THE PITT REPORT LAID OUT THE AGENDA FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE AND THAT ITS RECOMMENDATIONS SHOULD BE FOLLOWED. THE PLP WILL PUSH FOR REFORM IN ALL FOUR AREAS DISCUSSED IN THE REPORT, I.E., REDISTRICTING OF BOUNDARIES ON A HEAD-COUNT BASIS, ABOLITION OF DUAL-SEAT CONSTITUENCIES WHICH SHE CLAIMS PERMITS A WHITE CANDIDATE TO PIGGY-BACK TO VICTORY ON THE STRENGTH OF A BLACK RUNNING MATE, LOWERING THE VOTING AGE TO 18 AND ABOLITION OF THE EXPATRIATE VOTE. WHEN QUESTIONED ABOUT HER EXPECTATIONS REGARDING AGREEMENT ON ANY OR ALL OF THESE POINTS WITH THE UBP, SHE STATED REALISTICALLY THAT ENOUGH PRESSURES MIGHT BE BROUGHT ON UBP LEADERSHIP TO LOWER THE VOTING AGE AND AN EXTENSION OF THE RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT FOR THE EXPATRIATE VOTE BUT THAT SHE DID NOT THINK THE UBP WOULD AGREE TO REDISTRICTING OR SINGLE-SEAT CONSTITUENCIES UNLESS INTENSE PUBLIC PRESSURES WERE BROUGHT TO BEAR. IN REPLY TO MY QUESTION WHETHER HER PARTY WOULD ACCEPT A PARTIAL REFORM PACKAGE THAT PRODUCED AGREEMENT ON SOME BUT NOT ALL FOUR POINTS, SHE EVENTUALLY CONCEDED THAT IT MIGHT, BUT QUOTE UNDER PROTEST UNQUOTE.

4. INDEPENDENCE: IN DISCUSSING THE PUBLISHED RESULTS OF  
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THE UBP CANVASS WHICH SHOWED A SIGNIFICANT MAJORITY OPPOSED TO EARLY INDEPENDENCE, MRS. BROWNE-EVANS CLAIMED THAT THE SURVEY WAS PARTISAN AND THAT ITS CREDIBILITY HAD EVEN BEEN QUESTIONED BY THE UBP'S PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER. SHE STATED AGAIN THAT BERMUDA SHOULD TAKE ITS LEAD FROM THE LANGUAGE OF THE PITT REPORT AND THAT THERE WAS NO QUESTION THAT HER PARTY'S PRINCIPLE PLATFORM ISSUE IN THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION WOULD BE FOR IMMEDIATE INDEPENDENCE.

5. COMMENTS: DURING OUR DISCUSSION, IT WAS CLEAR THAT MRS. BROWNE-EVANS HAS BEEN INFUSED WITH ENTHUSIASM AND OPTIMISM BY EVENTS OF THE SUMMER. SHE APPEARED MORE CONFIDENT IN MANNER AND MORE ARTICULATE IN EXPRESSING HER PARTY'S IMMEDIATE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND DEMANDS. HER SCENARIO FOR THE CONVENING OF A CONFERENCE AND THE PLAYERS WHO WILL ASSUME THE MAJOR ROLES OUTLINES HER TACTICS. SHE IS PUTTING THE ONUS OF IMPLEMENTING THE CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATION SQUARELY ON THE UBP AND PREFERS NOT TO HAVE IT DILUTED BY THE GOVERNOR OR THE U.K. GETTING INTO THE ACT THEREBY SERVING AS EVENTUAL SCAPE-GOATS SHOULD THE CONFERENCE NOT BE HELD. ONLY TIME WILL TELL WHETHER SHE HAS DONE HER PARLIAMENTARY HOMEWORK IN ASSUMING THIS POSITION.

6. IN THE PITT REPORT, THE PLP HAS FOUND ITS KORAN AND IN THE PERSON OF THE DYNAMIC OPPOSITION LEADER, ITS MOHAMMAD. SHE HAS ALREADY BEGUN HER PROSELYTIZING HERE AND HER MESSAGE IS BECOMING CLEAR. IN A PLP PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON AUG 24, SHE HERALDED THE PITT REPORT AS QUOTE THE LAST PEACEFUL CHANCE FOR CHANGE IN BERMUDA UNQUOTE. SHE REFERRED SPECIFICALLY TO THE REPORT'S CALL FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE AND ITS RECOMMENDATIONS TO ABOLISH THE EXPATRIATE VOTE AND DUAL SEAT CONSTITUENCIES. SHE EXHORTED HER AUDIENCE TO QUOTE COMPEL THIS COUNTRY TO HOLD THAT CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE BY DECEMBER 1978 UNQUOTE. HER PARTY IS SCHEDULING SIMILAR PUBLIC MEETINGS THROUGHOUT THE ISLAND.

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